THE ROYAL ACADEMY.

VARNISHING REGULATION.

I HAVE read with great pleasure your account of the anniversary dinner of the Artists' Fund, and your observation on Sir Charles Eastlake's announcement that the Royal Academicians had, from a sense of justice, given up the privilege of painting up their pictures on the walls of the exhibition previous to its opening. Indeed, nothing ever done by the Royal Academy was so well calculated to retrieve the honour of the institution and disarm opposition, to establish a mutual good feeling among artists and a wholesome condition and influence of the fine arts. To be told that the late Mr. Turner, an artist of vast celebrity and genius, was the last supporter of the unfair privilege, throws a deep shadow over the subject; but let us turn to the bright side of the picture; let us hope that the same liberality that has abolished the offensive and indefensible practice will proceed to effect a judicious reform in other respects, and thus, by a generous interpretation of their pledge "to support the honour and interest of the society," prove that it is a "trust for the benefit of art." Next to the late praiseworthy step of the president and Academicians, there can be nothing more desirable than an annual statement of the finance of the institution, similar to the balance-sheet of the Art-Union. A clear account of the income, the expenditure, and the accumulated fund, would, by dispersing doubt and mystery, put an end to suspicion, and add much to the real strength and honourable influence of the society.

The success of Sir Charles Eastlake's first experiment in a liberal policy, not less than the example of his friend and patron, the late Sir Robert Peel, must convince that gentleman that more honour and good-will are obtained by a liberal policy than by restriction and protective regulations; for whatever some may have imagined the exhibition gained by the Academicians painting up their performances, the public are this year as much pleased with the simple unvarnished face of the present collection (barring the absence of Landseer, Eastlake, &c.) as they were on former occasions with the deceitful glare of "flying colours."

The regulation in respect to varnishing is not a total prohibition, but a fair and impartial mode of affording a remedy in case of accident. Any exhibitor, on writing for that purpose to the president, receives in return a printed order, authorising him to varnish his picture at a convenient time; that is, before the exhibition opens to the public, viz. between six and eight o'clock in the morning,—time enough to wash or varnish, not enough to bepaint a picture. Academicians are subject to this regulation the same as others.

I have only to add, Sir, my thanks to you, for the readiness with which THE BUILDER disseminates valuable information to artists, and the generous and indefatigable zeal with which you have promoted the advancement of the Fine Arts. AN OLD ARTIST.

THE METROPOLITAN BUILDINGS ACT.

On the 24th Mr. Osborne asked the First Commissioner of Woods and Forests, whether he proposes to bring in a Metropolis Buildings Act in the course of the present session? Lord John Manners said it was not his intention to ask leave to bring in a bill such as that alluded to by the hon. gentleman; but he would bring in a bill in order to reorganize the present court, as we understood the noble lord. When Mr. Osborne said, "Am I to understand that the noble lord merely intends to bring in a bill to renew the powers of the court? Lord J. Manners, replied, "No. To re-organise and re-constitute it."

The officers of his lordship's department have been collecting information on the subject we know, but we do not think any bill is yet in shape, so that we cannot suppose Lord John Manners will be able to do anything more in so important a matter (even if he do so much), thus late in the session, than print his bill for consideration during the recess.

BRITISH ARCHÆOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION.

ON Wednesday, May 26, Mr. Baigent, of Winchester, communicated a notice of Bramdean Church, Hampshire, with descriptions of some mineral paintings in it, of the thirteenth century; also of St. John's Church, Winchester, with an account of his discovery of the figure of St. Andrew the Apostle and another personage on the walls of that edifice. Mr. Baigent expressed his belief that he should find paintings of considerable extent under the whitewash, which he is removing by permission of the incumbent. Mr. Aday Repton communicated a paper on Roman and British urns, accompanied by drawings; and Mr. Clarke, of Easton, Suffolk, an account of the discovery of a Roman vault at Roses Pit, containing five urns, some teeth, and bones, and one horn. Mr. Clarke also exhibited the impression of a gold Portuguese coin found at Hoo, with a testoon of Edward VI.

Mr. Syer Cuming read a paper on the Pau cases of India, in illustration of a brass cornet exhibited by Dr. V. Pettigrew, of Bengalese manufacture, which had been erroneously supposed by its proprietor to be the rest for the foot of a lance. A similar one had been used for the mounting of the ancient seal of the Grammar School of Ashbourne, Derbyshire! Mr. Cuming demonstrated that the use of this cornet was to hold the chunam, or shell-lime with which the Indians sprinkle or smear the leaves of the beetle-nut for mastication, and commented on the frequent misrepresentation of Oriental ornaments and instruments as European mediæval antiquities.

Mr. Gunston exhibited a pilgrim's token of the fifteenth century recently found in Brick-hill-lane, London; and Mr. Warren, of Ixworth, an interesting collection of recently discovered rings, including a gold ring, supposed to be Saxon, and an extraordinary silver ring, also Saxon.

The last evening meeting this season will take place on Wednesday, June 9.

NEW WORKS OF ART IN AMERICA.

A GROUP in marble, "The Shipwrecked Mother and Child," by Mr. E. A. Brackett, is attracting attention at New York. An interesting sketch of the artist's struggles appears in the *Home Journal* (U.S.). Shoe-cutting, block engraving for calico printing, and tomb-stone making, were his first employments; and when he began to be a sculptor, it was amidst great difficulties and privations. —"In October, 1848, in a small attic room in Tremont-row, Boston, Mr. Brackett began to model his group of the 'Shipwrecked Mother and Child.' In that garret, early and late, alone, poor, sustained by hope and that interest in his task which only an artist knows, he toiled for five months and a-half; and the group then lay before him fashioned in clay. And here, to the honour of the poet Dana be it recorded, that he had not merely cheered on the artist in his labours, but raised for his support a loan of one hundred and forty dollars, without which timely assistance the work could not have gone on." But to what good work was the hand of that distinguished ornament of literature ever backward in lending its best help? The exhibition of the group in plaster brought a small sum; and, trusting to promised aid, he ordered a block of Vermont marble, and erected a small building to receive it. At this stage of his proceedings he learned, to his utter dismay, that the aid upon which he had relied could not—owing to the misfortunes, not the fault, of those who had promised it—be afforded him. He had nearly exhausted his little capital in the erection of the temporary studio. The marble was to be paid for on its arrival. His family—a wife and two children—were to be maintained during the progress of the work. Despair again took possession of his soul, and he proposed to his brother, with bitter jocularity, to place a keg of powder under the model and blow it into the air. His brother, however, whose generous fidelity to his brother's welfare always became most conspicuous when there was most need of it, and whose faith in the sculptor's ultimate triumph never wavered, undertook the task of obtaining means to go through with the work. He accordingly drew up a paper, stating clearly and briefly the case as it stood. He called upon twenty-two of the leading men of Boston, applying to each for a loan, on behalf of his brother, of fifty dollars, to be repaid with interest on the sale of the group. All but two subscribed with the utmost alacrity; and in one short week he had the rare pleasure of placing a thousand dollars in his brother's hands.

Aided by his brother at night, there was sixteen hours' work done on the group every day for twelve months, and in January last it received the last touches. Whatever right one brother has to be proud of the other's ability, the latter should be equally proud of his brother's devotion.

Leutze's Pictures of American History.—The *National Intelligencer* (U.S.), speaks well of a series of pictures illustrating American history, commenced by Mr. Leutze; "Washington Crossing the Delaware," and "Washington Rallying his Troops at Monmouth." The paper we have quoted says, his great difficulty was the want of a *type* of American character, and especially a type that would help him to delineate the men whose characters were moulded by the revolution. "While all the more prominent countries of the world were old enough in civilisation to be characterised by a type, he saw that the United States, though marching on to immense power and greatness, were without this symbol of distinction. He discovered the type for which he was seeking in *a peculiar contraction of the brow and a brilliant eye, and a mouth which denoted indomitable perseverance, industry, energy, and fearlessness.* No sooner had he made this discovery than it appeared to him as plain as a solved riddle. This type of the American character was indeed the enigma of his life, and strange as it may seem, we have been assured that his mind was troubled about it for no less a period than six years."

Beauty in St. Thomas, West Indies.—Mr. N. P. Willis, in Letters from the Tropics, which he is addressing to the *Home Journal*, suggests that artists should go to St. Thomas, to arrest types of human beauty that are passing away. He says—"Artists know very well that the *original and distinct* types of human beauty and expression are few and rare. In all the engravings of female heads, in France and England, there are not a dozen. The others are variations of these, more or less slight, but all traceable. In St. Thomas, during the four or five days that I have rambled through its streets and markets, I have surprisingly enriched my knowledge of how Nature can vary these priceless *gifts of individuality*. Faces, curiously different from any I had ever before seen, met me at every turn; and it was not till I had reasoned a little upon the origin and habits of the people, and made some inquiries as to their races and combinations, that I could at all understand it."

Banvard's New Panorama.—Mr. Banvard is engaged upon a new panorama, which is "to throw into the shade all previous panoramic paintings." It is to be called the ORIENT, and is composed of scenes painted by the artist in the course of a two years' tour in the Mediterranean, Egypt, Nubia, Arabia, the Dead Sea, Palestine, Jerusalem, Baalbec, Tyre, and Sidon. This panorama will contain six times as large a surface of canvas as his panorama of the Mississippi, and will be exhibited in London some time in the course of the next season.

The National Academy of Design.—The exhibition of works of art, now open, is not an advance upon that of last year. In portraiture the American press claim for their painters a great superiority over those of England!

Proposed Equestrian Statue of Washington.—An idea, often talked of in New York, is, we have reason to believe, about to take visible form and shape. A bronze equestrian statue of Washington has been projected, to be the joint work of the sculptors Greenough and Brown, who have already commenced the designs for the work. The military costume

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